STATE
Interlude
in
a dream
james lessae

Interlude In A Dream

James Lessae

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...well I got that job with the state you know, and I had to travel around a lot, and the towns, they always seemed so real... but everywhere I was I was still in this same damn state, the same humdrum of nothingness... but then, once I started stealing the state's money see, and just blowing it, all of it, on booze, on women, on drugs... it was like a technicolor dream... and when they finally busted me, almost four years later was it? (laughs out loud) even then I didn't wake right up, it was still a dream, a beautiful dream, for a little while more...

-Scooter B. prison interview, 1992

3 Times 6

coffeeshop... in southbound sun
glass crossed with gorgeous masks of light
getting ahold of emptiness
leaving the rest to hell undone...
past somewhere deep in fulsomeness
all that contrary furie fun
sans effort, seen with second sight
wheels of joy endlessly spun...
tarnish? no such thing as blight!
her coffee cupped, them atoms *hummed!*
the waiter - boy - poised with hi-test
her eyes dream deep - thin lips lie mum

he's trouper with... Icelandic grin
slow shakes her mane... in slipstream, free
the skewback of a portal arch
then echo flashed through worlds of men...
stiff upper lip? just heavy starch!
and argent eyes? Hollywood flint!
she glance and brother see *like speed*
flips 'round with flukes and flies like sin...
in backyard dog upchucking weeds
and cat asleep where wavelengths bend
the horse's hooves polished for march
out past the blue sky's never-ends

hear me? like fresh pack of cards
riffling, dealt out slippery new
see that one? it’s the king of balls
arise his gleaming one-edged sword...
glows don’t it? like dusk basked in thrall
streaked with boldened melting shards
holds wondrous promise to the few
chosen - as if! - by drunken darts...
and next to that, in beatoff shoes
the dour clown of buttercup farts!
bandanna made from stolen shawl
fat fingers swearing on his heart

windblown clouds before a storm
elmtree tunnels, sidewalk cracks
houses in stark surreal light
intimations of God’s own form...
ozone crackle - senses all bright
alive and feeling far from norm
gray-purple clouds in rolling stacks
goosebumps, quivers... yet somehow, warm...
Djill feels her tensioned body relax
feels tugs of love and love-lost, lorn
slows down before she runs through night
and runs all empty into morn

he whispers *veno subito*
slips that way to another life
vibrations keyed to present shiver
alive with uncreated glow...
Djill put *that* arrow in her quiver
cobalt 60 half-life ago
and nothing that she later swiped
was half as sweet or quarter bold...
the next exhale she really pipes
cascades out across the folds
silk drapes her like a howling river
tyrian purple shot with sloe

torpedoes nosed out from their tubes
like quivering projectiles...
yer ‘scopes all say your need’s extreme
energy’s down, under fullish moon...
blazed on your jacked - yer booted mind
dreams of rude boys/thighs smooth pewter
cool enough to condense most steam
but not yrr downbound dragon fueler...
can’t even muster up a smile
they think you’ve suffered fates far crueler
sun hazing into eggshell cream
blood draining back from distals, cooler

waiting fer night aand to get *messed*
and for them to legalize-it
so’s bite just right to make you flow
like liquid skies hot blue caress...
then icy spikes of crystal snow
fall on you hot with blood impressed
and shooting stars cross sky backlit
in swoon, delicious pain and jest...
the air as sweet as angel tit
wafts of freedom from the west
sky saffron under indigo
joy out there! - from all paths digressed!

8 Up

drink self into oblivion
a bleakness vast as sea of tears
razed club lot and near-dawn light
mind romps but psyche don’t respond...
aww feel better near end of night!
-yo Scoot! -hey man... -whas happen son...!
-done ‘em another night of fear!
-me too... wow, sky so subtle crayoned...
-dese floaters think dey so damn weird
dey just these dressed-up leetle peons!
sometimes? feel just like Mack the Knife
cool an’ slick as compressed freon!

-ah Scoot, yew virgo holophote
c’mon, dance up some Malpert dust!
dose nymphies touch like feather, slide...
then wrap themselves ‘round your guilloche...
-no man I’m feeling... sorta wide?
an chrise whas happen to your nose?
think maybe I be catchin’ gust
sun-soaking breeze and brand new trope...
black asphalt green with maple husks
almost circadian bouts of hope
that yas indeed! world will provide!
while you just feel... whole rich n’ slow

air guitaring *Only Way Out*
time pissing ‘way at *Uncle Steve’s*
time/beer run like some alter-life
that Scooter'd already tossed about...
played with like a shimmery knife
all blustery divigated spout
splattered with his pervert’s peeves
'n cocksure wiseass gadabouts...
-ain’t bringin in no fuckwad sheaves!
Scoot drunken with tolltaker’s clout
starting to stop to wonder why
he order ‘nother... ‘n music loud

feeling cold, grim and deathlike
some hon sleeks in glinting perfume
brushes close... distant as dream...
sure ain’t Darleen those hard heel spikes...
her eyes almost a glowing green
all in black, just accent strikes
someone sez the moon’s full blue
jest scudding thru that foggy night...
Scoot looking for that grand exhume!
release from living death hitchhike!
hears Uncle Steve call her...
bar melting to a mud van Eyck

this was a different feeling
came uplifting through fatigue
spiritual... desperate as hell
heart naked, all its love revealing...
to know, to *know* - but never tell
of blood you spilled, the phony healing
of mazes filled with crude intrigues
and gulling clods to do your stealing...
and all the time out of your league
as far as night on starry ceiling
fools drifting by to wish you well
then sucker punches... send you reeling

so beat of rambling scene to scene
skippin' thru drunken midwest haze
along those lonely dark roadsides
skies filled with dullards' sparkless dreams...
Scoot now starting to divide
her glow like some pure pulse of heat
passing to old familiar stage
longing for touch, dreaming to meet...
the bricks outside dull red like gage
soft pole lamp glow across the street
Scoot out alone, too stiff to ride
waves of that cobalt-yellow sea

Darleen Darleen... cold *christ* Darleen!
dios, I know you in my blood!
soul glow through flesh pulsing with heat!
from inside-out yer beauty's sheen...
mah breakfast beer on breakfast wheats!
youse eatin' eggs! you youngblood clean!
wonderin' if day last long enough
to burst with all creation's seed...
light fuses on a billion duds
find *one* bombatom pistolqueen!
racing through light and shadows fleet
past foulmouthed drudge-day workweek scenes...

mmmm... deeply into capricorn
sunburst! starburst! light fall like rain
globular! spherical!... purebright
and giddy joy soaked in adorn...
tree's bare twisted fingers... night!
purple clouds 'n new new morn
clapboard street fronting vague terrain
yer duster red as barleycorn…
leaned 'gainst edge of an open plain
dawn strewn above, moon silver horned
before you? bound with worldly bight
then prancing like hard unicorn!

yer sun gold hair love, purple eyes
body lithe as bamboo soaked
it’s day, you sleepin’, wonder where
wonder how deep, what color sky...?
it’s raining here 'n drizzlin' there
so bored and cold and fit to die
wishing on stars, get little choked
then strong as fate! lived through love lies...
bullfrogs out there gutting out croaks
ribets and crickets 'n warm fogrise
you somewhere now, you on a tear
soarin’ where only angels flys

hung out to dry somewhere between
by light by love by all that’s true
wanting more than he could seize
Scoot craving something lost in dream...
a harbinger of something new!
something long known and yet pristine
to drown in sleaze and yet to ease
unscathed through atom cracks, between...
your body paint love... redwhite... blue...
like colors of a dragon queen
but your parade dispense with tease
all blazing hot incarnadine...

Scoot loved that girl... thought glimpsed her soul!
but got let go and had no choice
things work or don’t you know old son
you deep into American hole...
damn bales of plastic weigh a ton!
Scoot quits that job man/ain’t no dole
for ‘while just bummin’ off homeboys
then back on turnpike takin’ tolls...
just be a robot! on you foist
sheer luxury! pure mindless goals!
sheer atom rhythm - stiff as gun!
waiting... waiting! happy as troll!

black lot red sun... hill loping down
billygoat roaring up ahead
wide swath of tar all commerce-lined
east, and clouds like made-up clowns...
six horsepower, like pride o’ lions!
french fries no longer golden brown
pile of butts traced lipstick red
don’t yet exist, she ain’t... announced...
early morn mysteries instead
feelings for which there ain’t no nouns
no verbs or words of any kind
just sneaky/discharge gates/that pounce

flipping sizzling rows of burgers
salt-slinging and cold onion bits
smells grease... and caramelized toast buns
tongue dreamin’ dipped in sugarpowder...
just wants to put it down and run
fly far removed from worldly ardor
melt into skies supernal lit
mindless as easy flowing water...
door opens... all those westward gits
dreams fabricated shiny quarters
rare moods where joy’s not something won
just walked out into... sweet disorders

what a pisser - dam broke no flow
ole Scooter cooling up his heels
ripping tickets, mumbling mantra
he’s cardboard propped by one weak fold...
eyes glazed with wispy nebulas
even those four-inch spikes... don’t notice
checkerboard restroom, he always freaks
comes out all giggly, cold to bone...
a plex, some perps... a dope, some deals
shift almost over... called like loan
the way out half parabola
steps grace notes tumbling ‘cross moonstones

wearing Very Important stripes
out on a tarlot, sellin’ iron
a neon sign across the street
glows like some secret Mario pipe...
draws you like seductive heat
eternity, and no more hype
glow like cartoon *Lost Dutchman Mine*
lush with warmth, all overripe...
glorious! fugue! incarnadine!
as if really were archetypes
and sacraments that could complete
your ragged soul... deep dread of night

looking to fry like bacon, mind
with wattage of a billion joules
mystic pickups... majestic highs
dense fibers blown to pulpous rinds...
white milky panes imbric the sky
and heads protrude like moon’s dark sides
Scoot gloms a butt between the newels
that raise wrought iron on dog-like hinds...
smoke rises in cruel parody
of sky the soaring glass leaves blind
then adds its own gray filmy blight
to further mask his riven eyes

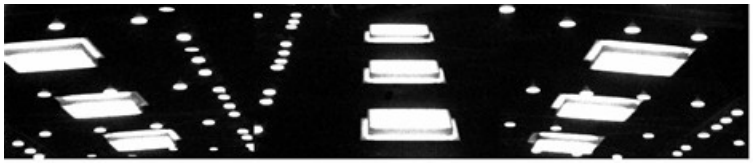
old ex confessing new love, aw chrise...
bruised in the pit, spilled out to dark
clouds stretch like pale mountain range
yellow streak down Main... down Broad... down High...
darkness unfolding so damn strange
in widemouth cones of halide light
through fog drawing off in cold wind arcs
revealing moon, and streets blue-bright...
flapping halyards, li'l plastic park
town polystyrene, vinyl life
all hoarded up like chinked chump change
stacked down and mortared, slice by slice

very elegant face in profile
romantic fiction glimpsed head-on
Hecate eyes/aura/*and lilt*
but barmaid sexy from her thighs...
more his type, sexy as silt
steamy, liquid, dark 'n lithe
Scoot's someone else! damn shallow pond!
letting this flirt draw with blush-smiles...
feels whole new self here being drawn
into a smarmy love's beguile
thank GAWD the barmaid's presence kills
the bargirl's fecundating vines

☼

once out the door, bent not broke
shaken not stirred, Scoot making way
headway? footpath... clear stellar drift
blue cobalt... billion silver spokes...
glazed arctic plunged with purple rifts
sun bleary as a runny yolk
the ones you want don't never stay
your wants all wrong... your needs a hoax...
all stations of the cross in play
blonde statuesque... a voice that croaks
try anything for some uplift
for soulmate yearn... dovetailed... bespoke

get on it, do it every day
ride on bareback through the night
old coelacanth that swims upstream
sunlight on walls in matinée...
fingered shadows broke from beams
sky warm as settling fireclay
organic rich orgasmic bright
each breath a lonely grand soirée...
a winter, winter warm and white
cold fusion slowly underway
dead embers touched by strikes of gleams
soft falling through the Milky Way



-The mirror boy, she said off-handedly. He had passed now, whoever he was, waving from across the street as he walked. -Up there in South Bay, she added. I sipped my tea, while she signaled for another corretto. The sun was up, the beach was half washed away, and the highway was sheened with glistening mud. -I left a small town too, she said, not at all wistfully. -You know last night, I was standing in the doorway blowing smoke rings out into the downpour, and I was thinking about it… the town slut, always flashing her tits in the poolroom of that stinking tavern… not that they were so big or beautiful, but just, bigger and better than yours… I dreamed about getting out… dreamed about out-of-state plates on a car, and a man with sunglasses and a cigarette and his arm you know, propped out the window all tan and glistening in the sun… and then, all of those old red brick buildings disappearing into the distance…

-Were there tracks? I asked. She raised her head a bit, almost half a shrug… she was looking past me.

-Tracks... she said, -of course there were tracks… and I could see Newlove Road, plain as day. She paused. The pole heater closest to us had run out of kerosene, and you could feel the sudden lack of warmth. The small town I had come from had in reality been a small suburb, with a large city not far away by train, not one like hers, apparently, off in the middle of nowhere… still, growing up, I'd imagined that every rail line was connected to every other rail line, and even now I couldn't help thinking that when I had gone out and played by the rails

and touched them, that I was also touching the ones that had run through her town. The waiter came by with her corretto. She cupped it in both hands and held it up where she could inhale the steam, her eyes closed.

-You get a hint of the pomace, she said after a moment, -deep, underneath it all. She took a sip, and opened her eyes.
-September, she continued, -late September… sometimes I'd get a ride, and the corn was so tall and close to the road you could almost reach out the window and touch the stalks… but this time I was walking. And as it went on, Newlove passed by dark, golden-brown bean fields too… they curved up a slope towards the horizon… thin shreds of cloud in the wind, steel-blue sky… cattails drooping over fuzzy-gold, their leaves faded greenish-gold… and crickets. All the fields, all around, all filled with crickets, all chirping, as though it was their own private universe, and you were immersed… oh, and the trees… they had that pure green glow that comes just before their leaves begin to turn… old weathered fenceposts only waist-high strung with wire so old and brown and grown over with brown weeds you could hardly see it… sawed-off telephone poles bleached gray and smooth, with only a few wires, gleaming in the sun, and the road just gray gravel poking through black tar, winding away around the curve towards town… maybe it was the last warm day of summer… under clear, warm blue fall sky… and then the wind whipped up, and it beckoned me, just beckoned me on, stronger and more powerful than anything my heart ever knew it could want, and I almost cried but I didn't, I just promised something to myself, and went home…

There was some music playing, but it was turned down, or from far away, and it kept getting lost when the breeze picked up a bit, then it would reappear later when the breeze died away… saxophone and piano… not melancholy, but contemplative.

-You could tell me a train story, she said, -seeing as how you mentioned tracks.

-I don't really have any, I said, -I didn't actually grow up around them…

-God, she said, dryly, -what a void… want me to make one up for you? She smiled. -Sure you do. She conjured a cigarette, and must have willed it lit, all I saw was the signal for another corretto. -That night, she continued, -that you came to see me, totally out of the blue… and it was that cold cold… *fucking cold* night… and you were in such a fine beautiful mood… I knew you were. I know I was crying my eyes out when you got there, in the dark, in that starched, monogrammed shirt of his, you must have thought I didn't notice it, but I did… I even noticed myself thinking what a waste, of that mood, because I could see the energy going out of it even while you were trying so hard to use it to cheer me up, and there was nothing I could do, I just knew that it would all go out into the night, into the cold, and that the cold would win… you were so brave… you lasted, what, half an hour? God, I didn't blame you when you left… but I could see… I didn't even have to budge from my spot on the floor… how the cold didn't quite hit you at first… how you walked out to the street, and saw a bus, and saw it was heading the wrong way but how you assumed it would turn back around at some point and take you down to the train station… but it didn't. It took you miles away, to the last stop and you had to get off into a goddamned crumbling neon inferno, and then there you were wondering what next, and even looking for a moment for a place to get a drink but it was sort of late and you were starting to feel the cold and you just wanted to lay someplace down warm and… you saw the white hotel. With some half-lit pieces of a neon sign, it was almost pink, on a blue background… a vagrant hotel but you didn't care until you got in, and heard the yelling in the halls and saw

the encrusted crud of the room and decided you weren't cold or tired enough to stay… and you - you! - so clever… took the bus back down the right way, and even got to the station in time to catch the last train out. -And, she inhaled, and exhaled a wide cone of smoke, then a ring… -it really was a comfort, wasn't it, running through that vast old familiar place through the big doorway into the railyard, all black and noisy and vapor-ous in the chill, and seeing the red lights of the waiting train, and climbing aboard… the stainless diamond plate decking, the conductors in navy blue with gold buttons, the bistre paint and the green seats, the double deck and the brushed stainless rails up and a seat by yourself in the near emptiness because at this hour in this weather… and the jerk when it pulls, and creaking slow out of the yard, the dim light and other trains out there and the sound of it, the vibration of the engines and a slight tang of the diesel fume and - God knows, don't He - the *horn*… the conductor calling out the sequence of all those old familiar stops… the punching of the tickets, that sh-klisk sound… and the clickety-clack rhythm, increasing as you gain speed, declining as you lose it… the red lights on the gates you fly past and the blurred yellow light of the towns where you stop… oh yeah, and where will you stop? It won't be where you grew up, will it, because everyone you know has moved away… but you're safe. You remember a stop where there's an all-night restaurant don't you. You listen for the sequence… and when the conductor calls it, that stop, you don't get up too soon, you wait so that when you do get up, and walk down the aisle of the top deck with your hand on the cool stainless steel rail and your eyes on the empty bistre luggage bins and the empty green seats and the wider empty aisle below, it's all timed so you come down the stairs and through the sliding stainless steel door to the middle of the car and out onto the diamond-plate decking and down onto the steps right in front of the sliding doors that'll let you off, just as the train's gliding towards its stop… you have about thirty seconds of that

delicious, slow glide… the conductor standing there too, ready to step briefly down, signal, and step back up… the lights of the town and the few markers you can make out gliding by reassuring and familiar… and the tang of the cold seeping in too, through the black rubber bumpers not quite sealing the doors… and then you're out there. The conductor's signaled, and the engines roar and belch smoke and he's stepped back up and soon enough, drifted off into the night… the cold, cold, *fucking cold* night, and all that's left is the distant wail of the horn. She smiled. -That restaurant you thought was there… man, it isn't even closed… there's nothing there… nothing anywhere. You find a pay phone and try to call a cab but the phone's dead… frozen. So you start walking, under a bright beautiful moon… even crunching through frozen sheets of snow here and there… walked for miles, didn't you… but you finally got to a commercial strip you knew… and found a suburban fleabag motel...!… and not enough heat - not any fucking heat, really - water that might just as well have been ice, thin blanket, lumpy creaking mattress… yet somehow, you slept, and left as soon as you woke the next morning and walked back towards town and there was a laundromat open down across from the tracks and it was warm, wasn't it… and when the train came you didn't even care, you just kept washing the same little bundle you'd crabbed out of your overnight case, over and over, just sitting there, listening to the machines, absorbing the warmth and watching the light pour down from the sun into the clear blue sky…

-All right, I said, -I'll tell you my train story - it's my only one… you suppose you could pass me a cigarette? She did, and I struck a match and lit up. -There was a time when, supposedly for my own good, I'd been sent to an institution… it was out in the middle of nowhere, and I didn't think there was anything particularly wrong with me, so, one beautiful early summer day, I left. I knew there was a train station a few miles away, we'd

passed it on the drive there, and I had some money stashed, so I walked up the road that way, and after awhile saw it up ahead, this old Victorian affair gleaming in the sun… I got there, bought a ticket, and went up to the platform to wait for the train… remember thinking that I couldn't have imagined a more glorious day… not just the sun and the sky, but there was that certain lilt to the wind too, a hint of eternity in the air like… anyway, just before the train was scheduled to pull in, I noticed a girl walking very fast and purposefully towards the tracks from the side opposite the platform, approaching from the wrong way, across the field that spread out there… she was about halfway across the field when we heard the train horn sound, and saw it coming from around the bend. She heard it too, and broke into a run. She had this battered old valise held together with straps and it was awkward for her to run with it but she was running, the case dragging along with a mind of its own and almost jerking her arm out of its socket… anyway, all us passengers up on the platform were watching now and we could see that it wasn't the passenger train coming, that it was an express and it wasn't going to stop… we were shouting at the girl and trying to wave her off but she didn't hear or didn't care and she kept coming on… when she got up to the rails she shut her eyes and without breaking stride she just vaulted across, valise and all… she actually had about… seven seconds to spare, then the express ripped past… she just climbed up on the platform, dusted herself off, and waited for the train with the rest of us. The funny thing was though - I was talking to her on the train - she had no idea she'd closed her eyes and jumped over the tracks - in fact, she was sure they'd been open the whole time…

-Stop lying, she said, -let's stop lying. Tell me the truth, ok? I'll tell you the truth too… I don't mean just telling things that are true, I mean, the truth, ok? Just then I glimpsed the mirror boy, coming back the other way, but closer, on the same side of the

street this time. He glanced at me, and he smiled, but he slid off on a side street before he came into her line of sight. He looked like a trickster… a fool… someone all too familiar with crossroads. He looked even more familiar than that though… long red hair, and that long straight nose and the certain set of his eyes… it suddenly came to me that he looked like John Bunyan, or at least the picture of John Bunyan that had hung in the basement of the church in the town where I'd grown up, where they had Sunday school… John Bunyan. The celestial city, and the tiny jail cell in Bedford in which he wrote Pilgrim's Progress. I'd always liked the idea, even just the sound, of the celestial city. Once in a department store I'd seen a sign above an escalator that had said UP TO THE BASEMENT, and it had had the same effect on me. It made me smile, quite a wonderful-feeling smile at that. I realized I was smiling it now, and it was the mirror boy who had set it off, and I felt grateful for that. I noticed then, coming out of the pause, that there was an eager anticipation in her eyes.

-Ok, I said, the smile still pouring out of me, -you start.

-Okay! she said excitedly, breaking into a grin of her own, all her own. -Okay! I'm going to tell you about the place where the old cat moves like a fragile shadow… about wet asphalt pretending that it's sky, and white wind-blown spring blossoms pretending they're stars, and a glow of artificial colors reflecting like a shimmering city… about flirting on a barstool behind your lover's back, and knowing what's happened on a thousand other nights in a thousand other places in a million other segues…

-Yes, I said, already dreaming… -please tell me that… please tell me all of that.

3 Times 8

‘nother blue day on Betelgeuse
aureate blue, surreal as screen
twined with oak, limbs spray-paint black
at rim, glow pink as grapefruit juice...
gold pagodas naked stacked
far silhouettes ‘gainst carmine hues
clouds indigo and tourmaline
in raimented, dull red occluse...
vast lake of purple gasoline
star’s sinking bulk through dust like muse
all breathed so close like deep dream track
immaculate, far from abstruse

a fine by christ red whisky day
for sculling wakes of Jupiter’s moons
inhaling pungent rock-dust rings
glow colors like dragonskin-slay...
Djill’s heart bulged, hot blood swirling
wind cold and fresh as rock-salt spray
decked out in marvelous maroons
with hints of edges passion-frayed...
meant to loll in black saloons
sky streaked with contrails’ arcing sway
basked in sultry ravishing
tomorrows gone, and yesterdays

but near twilight urge strong and clean
to come down to the twin-cragged peaks
from stars that blazed with quickening fire
re-enter svelte warm flesh machine...
her annular strung like a lyre
quivering naked yet pristine
joints for a moment stiff and weak
then supple, flowing lost in dream...
Djill paused there on a tarry street
sky still aglow, against tree leaned
climbed over galvanized mesh wire
raced through fields, leapt over creek

behind the food court in a bar
goofin’ with a virgo clown
synapse roar behind her eyes
bright as sky of daylight stars...
here was here - and no more whys
she gets around - near maybe far
what’s never lost is always found
and no one wondering who she are...
left strewn whole rack of other lives
debris in wake like shipwreck spars
heads bob up before they slip down
her earthy taurus jugular

‘Djill slips away toward city heart
where plasma glow inferno paints
a jagged edge of red afire
soaked into indigo-deep quarks...
turned on by what would normal tire
long alley shades of shadows stark
a thirst that begs for amber slake
that slips past mind’s case-hardened bars...
three is luck - no empty refrain
on one you see her bought by czars
on two with charming fork-tongued liar
but three is three - so holy marked

spent hot blue days lazed lost in love
flung windows, breezes eased aloft
sounds of actions distant spawned
drunk sober... brain dead... leisure... sluts...
sold out and spending dawn by dawn
could last for years the velvet glove
drifting dawns all goosedown soft
woke floating blue on high cloud puffs...
then one day knocked flat in a trough
so wasted didn’t feel the thud
the joyride all packed up and gone
galaxies twirling far above

8 Down

-so unpleasant to be around
these blobbed misshapen lunking crones
oblivious, but full of rights
obtuse with all their own dull sounds...
-chrise Scooter, you're a bitter fright
-a little *tired* of the clowns?
-well yes I am, they're full of stones
and all their heads so pumpkin-round...
stand in the way and then they moan
as though whole world just *caved* in frown
and blocking up your lines of sight
with constipated ego-mounds

eight images in the mirrors
never be closer to the edge
marooned in hopeless entropy
beyond the eighth? a murky sliver...
mouth a cavern, dry and groaty
fever brewing, and wracking shiver
like penance for some sacrilege
buzzards ripping rotted liver...
but you don't wanna take the pledge
you gonna let another slither
out yer vocals rasped and throaty
then down and down your starving withers

someone kept buying Scooter beers
a different someone every time
someone would have to drive him home
and try to catch his inner ear...
(the land you used to yearn to roam
the dreams of higher highs drawn near
sights to come fresh in your mind
feelings not yet in dead arrears...)
but ended walking alone outside
clean breaks were better, just moonlight near
moods and emotions all your own
toward center you could surer steer

down the street sucked by the art crowd
all in black just like the punks
less pierced, more made-up - fatter cheeks
but just as much by groupthink cowed...
she said her name was Melody
she asked him if he liked the loud
Scoot said it felt like something leaked
but better than those hollow wows...
smoking off some sullen funk
off the beaten path in clouds
Scoot dreaming of eternity
Melody flickering in the now

then BOOM! you’re dead! you’re FUCKING DEAD!
dead as stoned December sun
dead as fingered polymer clay
bright liquid post-industrial red...
Scoot watching her gradual drift away
taurean moon glossed overhead
didn’t matter, wasn’t the one
some other tide lapping his head...
shot on the stage for someone’s tongue
thoughts getting’ heavier than lead
maybe there was no cool clear way
but Scoot WOULD move! beyond... instead

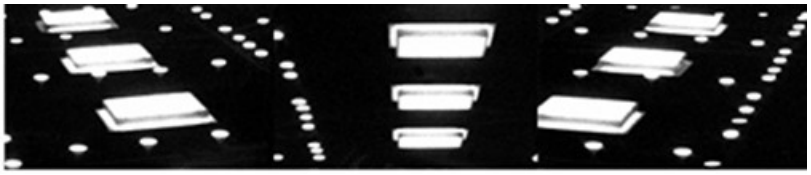
you like the DECONSTRUCTED, kids?
they gonna try and walk that walk
with money greed and comfort feed
age is sleazy - grabbin’ your dibs...
Scoot still had some traveling money
and almost almost still the itch
for ultrattractive trashy honey
hardwire to codes that made it stiff...
where third round shot like melted caulk
in awful spasm’s thick-punched dribs
(-th-the *original Mr. Cheap!)*
drooped heavier-than-thou eyelids

-of course you can't see much at night...
-always wanted to go there though
blow all the way to Venice Beach!
adsorb the rays and scale the heights...
-by daylight man, perfect nates
-just close my eyes and *hear* the sights
-just sweep through like cool virago
-perfect bronzing tans an' *lines...*
-get freaking on with total jones
time wasting in this hayseed blight
drink up, be gone! gone like a breeze
gone and feeling... alive and fine

rip through night like ax and chainsaw
eyes burning - means they pass through yours
like a sun the body glowing
sap that quivers limbs like jaws...
the river mud - they out there rowing
the river bile - they hands like claws
the river black - will not endure
black text beneath, rise like crow caw...
lumps like spiny urchin burrs
keeps the flesh unhealing raw
and arrows from red bow take wing
leave trails like widening bands of gauze

small rainy on the road and Scooter
burning candles in his guts
not thinking, oh! the night wastes ache
hand in his pocket ‘round his loot...
as though were transport - not to place
but to euphorias that shoot
electric just beyond your ruts
your spangled soulborn birthright suit...
got off oh god - all locked and shut
gray dust that never saw a boot
Scooter felt like he’d been maced
something that killed down to the root

Scooter was saltire in fusil
twice blessed with sun despite storm sky
crest shaped in tiny agate fonts
sly chiseled on old windowsills...
the marks of massive unknown wants
subtle as fresh sprigs of dill
the comforts of high days gone by
in soaring free-zone escadrille...
oh jesus, fucking christ, you die!
to have again your heart so filled!
to finally go beyond old haunts
and *live* in every moment spilled!



-… a *hag*, she said, with such finality that it was at that moment I stopped doubting anything she said. I hadn't gone from doubt to belief, but to another world altogether, where neither one mattered… where only the flow and sound of words in her voice mattered, and the reality of her, there in the room with me, saying them. -… thin, drawn, withered, and *horrid.* She took a drag, and the rest came out in smoke, which spilled through the soft, blue-white light from the city beneath that came into the room almost like wide, filtered moonlight. -It felt like the gates of hell were opening up, and that within another minute, I'd be drawn - *irrevocably* drawn - through them… so I said excuse me - this was a mistake. And I left. So… are you glad you stood up your friend? I told her that yes, I was glad. More than glad.

Her fingers smelled pleasantly of sulfur, from the matches she used, cut only slightly with burned tar. She had come down from the wide sill that framed the base of a wall-sized grid of windows where she had been sitting, legs stretched out, basked in the soft light, looking out over the tops of things. Now she was letting me hold her, her back to me, but her neck arced over my shoulder so her head was next to mine.
-I can tell you how it started, she said. -I can tell you exactly how it started, because it started on two days, and, I was living in his crystal palace… not as high up as this, but high enough, and with a better view… I loved that view… spent hours, watching the light shift… he was always off on business, made a failure of himself, you know how? It was because he had had one, gigantic success… that was how he was able to buy the

crystal palace, but then he made himself a failure trying to create another success… bigger than the original success, at first, but then maybe just equal to it, until finally, even a little pouf! of success would have done… I loved that view though, the south windows, just sitting there in the sun, blazing bright sun, on cloudless winter days… those ones that just sparkle, frozen with transparency, you know?… I wouldn't even smoke. You know at first, there would be that blue morning glow everywhere… like it was pouring up out of the ground rather than down from the sky... and the entire panorama shimmering with millions of golden-white reflections from the sun… and the smoke, I really loved that too… the way the vapor came out of the smokestacks just hanging there almost frozen, gleaming white, moving off slow as a lazy cloud… I'd close my eyes. Sometimes I'd fall asleep, but I'd try to meditate, just picture things in my mind, and hold them there, until they changed to something else… until they changed, I guess I was hoping, to blankness, to pure blankness, to inner peace or enlightenment, or satori or something like that… I don't know that it ever did, but I always felt really good, really serene when I opened them, later… and then, when I did, the tone of the light would be different… morning was gone. The light in the afternoon was richer - infinitely richer… more playful, and promising… especially, promising. And anyway, that first day it started, it was one of those… and when I opened my eyes - I think I'd fallen asleep - it was late afternoon. The sun wasn't even going west anymore - it was there - planted deep in the western sky, and everything was rich and red and filled with promise, and the vapor from the smokestacks still hung there, frozen, but now it was glowing a smoky salmon-purple, like the folds of a deep crevasse… and I just ached for that promise… felt like, it was aching too. It got dark so quickly… later, there was such a perfect crescent moon, flat as a bowl, gold and tilted up like tapered horns. But that's how it started, that first day, because I didn't forget that feeling. And so on the second day, that summer, I remembered… not just remembered… ached,

again.

At this I imagined she was smiling. Or, not really smiling, but smiling in herself, which somehow showed up on her face as a glow. I'd noticed it the instant I'd seen her, walking past outside the bistro window, and suddenly decided that I had waited long enough for my friend, and dashed out and asked her to have dinner with me instead. I felt her tilt her head toward me.
-Is she really your friend? she asked. I was gazing at the patterns of light on the ceiling, almost like flattened moiré from the blinds on the corner windows.

-I'm not sure, I said, even though I knew she was. She was as good as a friend as you could have, who didn't understand you beyond a certain level, because her awareness did not extend beyond a certain level… did not extend say, to the poetry that was the joyous, fractious being of your soul.

-Well, she continued, -that second day, it was but exactly like the first… except it was summer, so it wasn't quite as crystal clear, but still… it was a lot like today, actually, and - a *man* was supposed to come up that morning. He had this battered old land yacht he liked to park out near the shoreway, then walk across the park to the crystal palace… he said it was like walking through a gigantic back door that way. But he didn't come, and I sat in the sun, and I knew I would ache…
I remembered, and I knew I would, so I just laid down in the sun and waited. And when I got up, it was late afternoon, and the glow was in the sky, and I felt it, the ache of that promise… and then I felt a breeze come in the window, and I realized it was summer and it was warm and the light wouldn't fade for a long while yet… man, that felt good! So I went out, and I walked back through the park - the same way *he* would have, inevitably by then, had he showed… then past where *he* would have parked… then across the bridge over the shoreway, and I just paused there, letting it soak in… I paused all the way down

the beachfront letting it soak in, just letting everything soak in, everything I could see and hear and feel and taste and smell… that breakwater we walked past after dinner, on our way here? that was sort of my final pause… I'd walked out there almost to the end, where it tapers and curves around, and points back towards the city… god, the light was amazing… not rosy and surreal like it was tonight, clearer… and even with the sun down, the glow still felt warm, like fevered blood. And the moon was rising too, up from over my shoulder… full. The solstice. And an old cruise boat was going by behind me, throbbing with salsa music… I turned, and looked... it was full of revelers, and all decked out with strings of colored lights, and when it faded in the distance, I turned back, and the skyscrapers were all tiered in silhouette against the glow, and they looked wonderfully alien, and remote...

I kept expecting her to continue with her story, or maybe ask something about my friend, but she had paused.

Her body shifted, just slightly, as though twinged by a mild electric spark. She had left a window cracked open, and from somewhere far away, I heard fragments of a church bell sounding partials of an hour… that it was past midnight was all I could discern from the faint hints of chimes reaching through the night… for a moment I wanted to hear the wail of train horns too, rising and then tailing off somewhere deep in the night, and I realized I would, soon enough, when I was alone again. I must have twinged myself as that thought went through me, because she reacted, and drew closer, and began speaking again.

-So, it was night… dark and clear, and I walked away from the lakeshore… through a little park, onto a residential street, old and well-kept, lit with dim yellow light from glass globes on sculpted black poles… old polished wood doors you know, with leaded beveled glass… and some of the front rooms, spare,

and indirectly lit, they had that mysterious glow of emptiness that sends thrill-chills up and down your spine and all through you… it did. At the end of the block there were these long strands of vine with gigantic green leaves covering a wall, you couldn't even see the wall, and the leaves in that dull yellow glow were so smooth, and glossy… I touched them, and they felt polished and thick as heavy silver soup spoons… it's those clear black nights that feel the emptiest, you know…? and this one felt awfully empty… as though it had overspent the promise, of the day. I knew I'd never go back to the crystal palace... but I didn't know exactly what I would do, either.

At this, she rolled away from me and got up. I thought she was going to get a cigarette, but she went back to the window, the corner one with the blinds this time, and pulled them up, and looked away out towards the lakeshore. The flat moiré pattern disappeared from the ceiling and was replaced by a silhouette of her, in profile. I found myself staring at her shadow… how it moved slightly even in repose, and how it distorted as its subtle movements caught in the diffuse, yet separate and distinct sources of light that came up and through the window. There was a thin aura of violet-tinged blue dispersed over a faint, yet intense white that splashed across almost the entire ceiling, though around the edges, the color seemed to fade into a purer, darker blue… and then from one side, a wedge of amber cut in with surprisingly sharp edges, considering how dim it was... there was also a swath, an arc almost, of a greenish cast, that passed through the others like half of a verdigrised halo, and shimmered and danced as though it were being reflected from some shiny, slightly-moving object far away. And when it jostled in a certain direction, a faint red glow seemed to flicker there between its borderline, and the umbra of her shadow's edge.

Somehow, my attention had fixed itself so thoroughly on the

play of the patterns on the ceiling that I drifted entirely away from my surroundings… I found myself coming out of a museum into an invigoratingly cool blue twilight… it had been gray and blustery when I had gone in, but now there was a wonderful illumination in the air. I walked several blocks to get a clear view towards the west… where I paused, the street opened out for a good half-mile, and colors rose from dull smoky purple to deep-lake blue, and the streetlights glowed like party favors… when morning came, it opened with high and hazy clouds, swirled and streaked cream-colored against a faded denim sky… and when that again passed into night, the clouds rolled up into long mountain rises, and glowed white against an almost imperceptibly blue darkness, the way white stitching glows in a blacklight, as though luminous from within. I heard her voice again, but it was like hearing a voice in a dream… distinct, yet distant and removed, like a scene glimpsed out from the wrong end of a telescope. Nor did her words register verbally, but seemed to play out instead as images against the vague terrain of the night that had just opened before me. I saw her moving, magnetically, through grave primordial streets of a sleeping city, towards a place filled with red and amber light, and smoke and music and laughter, where men would buy her drinks and get high, and want her as much as they would ever want anything… when she got there, right to the doorway, she whirled about, and it was as though every degree opened on a portal to a different world… she was on her back on a red-carpet runway, looking up and winking one conspiratorial eye at the eyes above… she was sipping a cold red drink with a bitter aftertaste in a black modern club with washed-out glassy light and glowing yellow accents… she was a nymph at the bend of a river near an orchard, smelling of decadent, overripe fruit… she was standing to the wind on a beach past by dunes, and she tasted of sand, and driftwood sodden with sea… she was riding in a car late at night, windows all open, coasting down hills into banks of misty fog that slipped in cool and aromatic and

pungent as wine… and it was this last portal she seemed to choose, stepping into it with abandon and speeding through the night like a jagged streak of heat.

When I came out of the reverie, she was gone. I left too. Outside, I walked aimlessly, but after awhile found myself passing by the train station. I went in and bought a ticket. It would be awhile, so I went down the hall to the huge, high-ceilinged waiting room. I sat down on one of the massive wooden benches and swung my legs up sideways, the way she had sat on the windowsill. As I did, my jacket pocket flapped against my leg with an unfamiliar little thud, so I reached in and found a pack of cigarettes… her cigarettes. I tapped one out. The pack of matches was under the cellophane. I removed it and flipped it open. Under the cover there was a heart, drawn in smeary umber lipstick. I tore out a match and lit up. The cigarette tasted good - it was years since my last one. I smoked, and just let the heart soak into me. I figured I'd have another later, around the time when shadows were getting long, when I got there, to the end of the line… and after that, I would be on the brink, no doubt, of the gorgeous dawning of a glorious day.

3 Times 7

that neon - damn! - cold as the night
cold as the pine trees two-lane sawn
so modern feeling warm and live
feel love circling like satellite...
so cold and warm and flowed in drive
chill intertwined with bold twilight
warm modern with radio on
goosebumps like pricks of fine starlight...
you feel it, never really gone
feel like eternal appetite
and sometimes never more alive
a meteor burned fast and bright

eyes clear, sitting, dangling her shoe
‘cross from Seoul Garden’s yellow-red
like in some breezeway installation
of patterned bold fluorescent tubes...
dreaming of a warm soul kitchen
fixtures hanging half-unglued
not hungry for that daily bread
no need to burn no rockit fuel...
half alive, but way more than dead
feeling rude ‘n crude ‘n lewd
basked in a nightglow diadem
a constellation of whipsaw moods

☾

then tingling from an impulse veer
hot flush that filled some latent lack
gives up the spot - heads for the tube
like golden cotton candy, Djill's hair...
runway tarmac... that oughta do
get some there for this lousy here
this freaky now, these people stacked
smells of decay and lizard leers...
-because I'm beautiful... and tragic...
he waffled, holding ticket near
-and because... I'll always love you...
she sez, face pouty, pupils clear

sipping hummingbirds with gin
hummingbirds with gentian fizz
touched down fogged into midwest night
archaic mike big as a fist...
salts glowing focused in blacklight
suits plastered with their *prosek!* grins
voices like crackling butter hiss
music don't want to hear again...
skin like gum arabic, and kiss
like bitter galls lips dabble in
absinthe with yojimbe spikes
dead men form a proscenium

☾

image nailed coppera green
red-hot sound from Altamont!
tongue on the chrome (Constance Garnett!
the real thing!) then grid beneath...
Djill almost put her lips around it
dj amused, his alum teeth
drawn as a peasant - zek! - so gaunt
yearned to sleep and never dream...
clinical sex... all talk all taunt
sleep under the willows in Dixie
come shuddering alive - then quit
while you're ahead - your soul and sheen

black moon black moon... what fine sachet
in stairwell as though just before
wonder passed through just ahead
in haunchy swishing scrolled sashay...
horizon deeped with misting threads
clouds tattoo-purple, edged with rays
splattered with red maudlin gore
drizzling into a sunsmog gray...
oh if she felt! - she'd feel like lore
in slanted holy timeless sway
washed over by the black moonhead
round and luminous as a face

☾

there wishing it had never been
that alternate dimensions were
that time would heal like a flirt
and all be nice and clean again...
Djill liked to do a little dirt
she liked not knowing how or when
she liked to fade out in a blur
and break it off than rather bend...
told often she was immature
she didn’t care, they didn’t send
and anyway it never hurt
just fly away on angel grin

STATE